

Steal This Hook!

Halfling Crimes

By Robert Wiese



It seems that halflings get a bad reputation when they live in human-dominated areas. Crimes are always blamed on them. Do halflings turn to crime because the crimes are blamed on them anyway, or are the crimes blamed on halflings in general because a lot of crimes are committed by halflings? After all, the favored class for halfling is rogue. This month, we further this distressing stereotype by looking at some hooks involving halflings and crime.

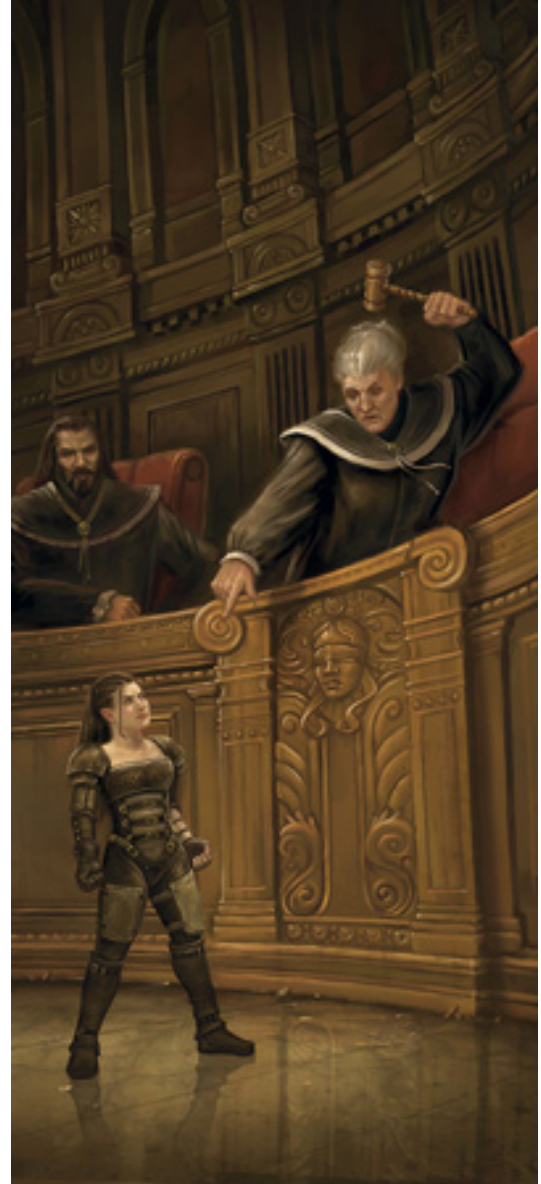
Fund Raiser -- *Eberron*

Wroat, the capital of Breland, is not as large or as "active" as Sharn, but it is nonetheless a center of trade and commerce as well as the center of the Brelish government. Merchants who have offices in Sharn also have them in Wroat, because the presence of so many officials and aristocrats holds the promise of lucrative business. Honest businesspeople are not the only ones who think so, either. A couple of weeks ago, some group stole all of the jewelry in the locked storerooms of the Devirr family jewelers. The next night, the home of a scion of House Orien was robbed, and more than 10,000 gp worth of goods were taken. And so it continued until the present. Every night brought another robbery, and thousands of gold worth of goods disappeared into nowhere.

It was not until the night before last that anyone had a clue as to the identity of the thieves. Some adventurers, out for a night of fun, came out of a tavern and walked (or staggered) back to their lodgings. On the way, they saw a group of halflings come out of the back of a warehouse carrying bags. The halflings quickly lost the adventurers and disappeared into sewer holes and other small places where the larger folk could not follow.

Wroat has some known "thieves' guilds," and the thefts were only surprising in their frequency, audacity, and in the amount that was taken. The royal guard and the city watch both keep track of groups of known thieves and roots them out where possible. But the groups don't disappear completely, and so everyone relies on a kind of code of honor to avoid losing too much (the thieves enjoy less vigorous attempts to root them out if they steal with restraint, and they sometimes bribe the watch). But this amount of thief activity is making the merchants and aristocrats angry, and they are demanding that something be done about the "thief problem."

Captain Rand d'Medani, a cunning half-elf who has risen to this position through effort rather than connections, thinks that something is going on behind the scenes, so to speak, and he'd like to know what that is before cracking down on halfling guilds. Because city watch personnel are usually terrible at streetwork and infiltration,



he hires the adventurers for 20 gp per day, plus hazard pay if things get really dangerous. In addition, they can keep, without reporting to him, anything that they happen to find that is not part of the stolen items from the recent string of robberies.

d100 Motivations

01-35 Rand d'Medani is on the up-and-up, and provides what assistance he can in a covert manner.

36-80 Rand d'Medani knows who is perpetrating the robberies (though he won't tell the adventurers outright), but he really doesn't know why. He wants to know, so that he can possibly use that knowledge to his own benefit. Rand is not above making a gold or 100 on the side.

81-00 Rand d'Medani is a member of sorts of the halfling burglars, or a close friend, and helps them in exchange for a small cut. However, he is feeling the pressure to eradicate the robbers, and pressure from the aristocracy cannot be ignored. He doesn't know quite how to handle the situation to keep the status quo.

d100 Complications

01-30 The halflings need the money to placate an enemy group that threatens their homeland. Should the adventurers find this out, they have to deal with agents of that enemy group and his aberration lackeys.

31-55 The halflings are innocent; someone is pinning the crimes on them.

56-75 There are no halflings at all. The supposed halflings are actually transformed demons or devils trying to raise money to use in corrupting important mortals.

76-00 The stolen goods have already been moved out of the city and to somewhere else. The people pushing for the investigation really want their stuff back more than they want any perpetrators caught, and any solution that does not involve the recovery of all stolen goods is not acceptable. The goods could be dispersed in merchant caravans by now going to the far corners of the world, or they could be in the lair of a black dragon . . .

Campaign Adaptation

Halfling burglars are not confined to **Eberron**. Use them in any campaign world. You can find out all about halflings in [Races of the Wild](#), and you can read as much about Wroat as there is to know in [Five Nations](#).

Forgotten Realms: Go for Waterdeep with this adventure hook. There is a lot written about Waterdeep, though, so you'll have to exercise some care in inserting these halflings.

Generic: Any city can support this adventure, but centers of commerce and politics are better. You can add more tension that way.

d20 Modern: Halflings for the modern day are presented in *Urban Arcana*. If you don't want to use them, you can use medusas or kobolds or even well-built robots working for mad scientists. The important thing is that someone needs a lot of cash right now. Consider a national capital for the setting, such as Cairo, Washington DC, Brasilia (the capital of Brazil), or London.

The Three Hagsketeers -- *Forgotten Realms*

Tethyr, a recovering power along the western coast of Faerûn, is home to a number of halflings as well as the dominant humans. Some halflings live in the large cities, and others live in their own communities near to the big cities but still far enough away to maintain the halflings' more rural way of life. One such



community, near to Saradush and the Forest of Mir, is having troubles that are not its fault.

Along the Zazesspur-Saradush trade route, people have started disappearing. Reports of robberies have also trickled in. The victims are usually lone travelers or small groups of travelers, but two merchant caravans have been attacked. One drove off the attackers, and one was lost completely. Among the victims, the reports are the same: a trio of halflings leads a group of monsters in the attacks.



Unrest has grown against the halfling community near Saradush, called Lydeskin's Grotto, because everyone who can describe the halfling villains describes a different set of halflings. Thus, the people are beginning to believe that everyone in the halfling community is involved. This has all the halflings of the land worried, because it is a short step from blaming one settlement to driving all halflings out of the country. In desperation, halflings from Lydeskin's Grotto have begun looking for mercenaries or adventurers or do-gooders who can help uncover what is really behind the crimes.

d100 Motivations

01-35 The PCs are approached by three halflings, who are really hags in shapechanged form. They are behind the crimes and want the inevitable investigators not to suspect them.

36-60 Unrest against all halflings is growing rapidly, and there are some who would hire the PCs to eradicate any halflings they happen to find. ("If you get them all, you'll probably get the guilty ones.")

61-90 The beleaguered halflings really need help, since they are likely to be driven out of the land or killed soon.

91-00 The halflings really are behind the crimes; they are working in association with a trio of hags to disrupt trade so that they can charge protection money.

d100 Complications

01-65 A trio of shapechanged halflings is committing the crimes, using different looks each time. They are not trying to bring trouble to Lydeskin's Grotto specifically; they just like blaming their crimes on halflings. They have some ogres in tow.

66-90 The trail of the villains leads into the Forest of Mir, which is populated by two elven tribes as well as evil goblinkind, trolls, and ogres.

91-95 There is a decaying *mythal* in the north part of the Forest of

Campaign Adaptation

Here are some suggestions for using this adventure in different campaign worlds. Halflings are described in *Races of the Wild*, and greenspawn of Tiamat are presented in [Monster Manual IV](#).

Eberron: Set this adventure in western Breland, near Shavalant. The people there already dislike Cyran refugees, and you can probably link the halfling community to Cyre in some way to drive the adventure into even more dangerous paths.

Generic: The basic setting includes a halfling village near to a trade route or trade center, and a forest or some such monster abode close enough to provide any monsters that you need.

d20 Modern: You'd have to convert hags for **d20 Modern** campaigns, but halflings might be strange enough that they would garner suspicion just for being themselves, and that would help immensely. You could use any shapechanging monster instead of hags. This probably would go over well in Ireland or Wales, but it might be interesting in Eastern Europe or southern

Mir, and the villains use its effects to throw off pursuers (the *mythal* turns helpful magic into harmful magic).

Africa, too.

96-00 The hags actually work for a great power, such as a green dragon or a group of drow. A green dragon might have greenspawn razorfiends and greenspawn sneaks working for it.

Possible Rewards

Because different groups could hire the adventurers, there are different possible rewards available. Residents of Sembia understand that there are valuable things besides money, and also that some of those valuable things don't cost as much as others do.

Hired by the City Guard: The city guard has a number of things it can offer.

- It can offer to overlook some crimes that the PCs might commit in the future (for whatever reason).
- It could offer to help secure the early release of a friend of the PCs who was incarcerated (or will be).
- Certain guards could have information of value to the adventurers while they are in Selgaunt. For example, if their real mission here involves some noble house, some of the guards might have inside information and diagrams of the noble's house and businesses.
- Some guards might be able to provide an introduction for the PCs to a noble who could become their patron while in the city.
- And of course, they can just pay the reward on Drayer.

Hired by the Crimson Daggers: The Crimson Daggers have the least to offer, but they can still make a good bargain.

- The Crimson Daggers are loathe to part with money, but they are not loathe to part with treasure maps to distant locales that they will never visit. They could have a map that leads to treasure anywhere in your campaign world that you want to send the PCs next.
- The Crimson Daggers are in the protection business, and they could offer to shadow the PCs and "make sure they're safe" while in the city. This means that they will try not to let anyone else kill the PCs, but won't promise not to kill them themselves.
- Members of the Crimson Daggers know people, and they could connect the PCs with someone who could sell them things they cannot get in the regular markets.

Hired by the Shadow Knives: The Shadow Knives would rather just use the PCs and kill them, and they may well try to do that, but they do have to offer something to entice the PCs to take the job.

- The Shadow Knives are connected to mages, and especially necromancers. They can offer unknown or rare spells to the PC spellcasters.
- The Shadow Knives are connected through bribery to the Hulorn (the ruler of Selgaunt), and they can offer his personal attention and patronage if the PCs are successful.
- The Shadow Knives have acquired a number of properties in the distant parts of Sembia, and they can offer one of these to the PCs as payment. This plot of land could be a harmless farm, or a ruined estate with a monster-filled dungeon.

- The Shadow Knives can offer the PCs their lives. In short, once the PCs complete the mission, the Shadow Knives set up a situation where they could clearly kill the PCs, and then offer mercy and drive the PCs out of Selgaunt instead.

Field Trip -- *Forgotten Realms*

Drayer Minoe is known to Selgaunt in many guises. Unfortunately, the one that mattered was exposed because of inept associates: Drayer is a master thief. A lot of thieves operate in Selgaunt, as one would expect of the largest merchant city in Sembia, but Drayer has been connected to several very important crimes. Further, he had angered both the city authorities and two rival thief groups, and they all want him dead. The sticking point is that they all want to kill him themselves and make sure the body is never found.

Some see Drayer as a dashing scion of the nobility, some as a quiet philosopher, and some as a dexterous circus performer. He has much in common with the halflings he has befriended in Selgaunt, except his height: He is nearly 6 feet tall. Using magic, his halfling friends slipped him out of town with one of their caravans, and if his disguise magic had not failed six days later, he would be home free. But it did, and someone reported his whereabouts to different parties in Selgaunt (collecting fees every time). Thus, there are a number of people who would hire adventurers to track down this halfling caravan and bring Drayer Minoe back to Selgaunt (but not necessarily to the law).



There is only one problem. The halfling caravan has disappeared since it was reported to those in Selgaunt. As in, without a trace. The adventurers discover this when they try to find it.

d100 Motivations

01-35 The Selgaunt city guards want Drayer because he is an independent in a city where the guilds all bribe the guard for freedom to operate (within limits). Free agents are rooted out as soon as possible lest they disturb the delicate balance of money flow into the pockets of the guards. They claim that they want him because he is a criminal, though, and that he must be brought to justice. If the adventurers turn Drayer over to the guards, he is executed as a pirate on trumped-up charges and his body "lost" forever.

36-70 The Crimson Daggers, a small but effective thieves' guild, want Drayer because he stole from a noble that paid the Crimson Daggers for protection. Thus, the Crimson Daggers look bad and may lose business, and the noble is demanding that the Daggers make good on what was stolen. They claim that they want back what Drayer stole, and don't need Drayer himself, but that having Drayer would go a long way toward shoring up their business interests. Drayer would be sold into slavery if brought to these people.

71-00 A much larger guild, the Shadow Knives, wants Drayer for quite a different reason -- they want the information he has on all the families and merchants, and plan on ripping it out of his mind. After that, who

knows? They claim, however, that they want to offer Drayer asylum and a way to continue to live in Selgaunt. If the heroes turn Drayer over to this party, then he ends up a mindless undead protecting some necromancer's private lab.

d100 Complications

01-30 The halfling caravan passed a little too close to a place at the edge of the Arch Wood where a Cult of the Dragon operation was in the planning stages. The cultists, led by greenspawn razorfiends (see [Monster Manual IV](#)), decimated the caravan and took a number of prisoners (including Drayer Minoe). These prisoners are destined for some vile use by the leaders of the Cult unless the adventurers rescue them.

31-55 The caravan was detoured off the main road and passed through a *portal* to the [Abyssal Plane of Spirac](#). The halflings and Drayer Minoe know they are in trouble, but the *portal* was one-way and they cannot return unless someone finds them and helps. Spirac is the Abyssal hunting ground, and there are a lot of demons that would love to hunt human adventurers.

56-75 The caravan was a ruse the whole time, concocted by someone who wanted to capture Drayer for her own reasons. Possibly this was a former scorned lover seeking revenge or to twist Drayer's love toward her again. Fiendish DMs might make the lover a succubus or a lilitu (see page 43 of [Fiendish Codex I](#)). The halflings were hired for the part, and the wagons contained only false goods or were empty. They were ditched in Ordulin, where Drayer and his lover capturer may still be.

76-00 Drayer Minoe is also a master murderer, and one night after making friends with everyone and gaining their trust he murdered everyone in the caravan and buried their bodies in the Arch Wood. He hid the wagons and set off on foot through the Arch Wood into Archendale, where his trail is lost without some magical means to pick it up again.

Campaign Adaptation

Place this halfling caravan mystery in your campaign world, whatever that happens to be. As noted before, you can find out all about halflings in *Races of the Wild*, [Fiendish Codex I](#) or *Monster Manual IV* will be useful if you use some of the complications.

Eberron: This adventure would work well starting in Korth, the capitol of Karnath. The caravan could be on its way to the Talenta Plains, the homeland of halflings in Khorvaire, when it disappears. If you use the alternate plane location, then somehow Eberron was co-terminus with Shavarath or Kythri.

Generic: A large city with several thieves' guilds is the starting point for this adventure, but after that it can go anywhere.

d20 Modern: Imagine a bunch of halflings driving from Las Vegas to New York in big rigs and disappearing somewhere in Ohio or Nebraska. Road trip? Yipes.

About the Author

Robert Wiese entered the gaming hobby through the Boy Scouts and progressed from green recruit to head of the most powerful gaming fan organization in the world. He served as head of the RPGA Network for almost seven years, overseeing the creation of the **Living Greyhawk** and **Living Force** campaigns, among other achievements. Eventually, he returned to private life in Reno, Nevada, where he spends as much time as possible with his wife, new son Owen, and many pets.

He is still involved in writing, organizing conventions, and playing, and he models proteins for the Biochemistry

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